

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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S E C R E T REYKJAVIK 1468

EUR FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY VEST

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS:MPOL, NATO, IC
SUBJECT: AWACS: PROPOSED DEPLOYMENT TO ICELAND

REFS: (A) SECDEF 202338Z SEPT 77
(B) REYKJAVIK 1273 (NOTAL)

1. NOW THAT PRIME MINISTER HALLGRIMSSON HAS RETURNED TO ICELAND FROM HIS OFFICIAL VISIT TO SOVIET UNION, I WOULD HOPE TO RAISE WITH HIM AT AN EARLY DATE PROPOSED DEPLOYMENT OF E-3A LATE NEXT YEAR TO ICELAND, (REFTEL A). I AM QUITE CERTAIN FOREIGN MINISTER DID NOT REPEAT NOT INITIALLY GRASP SIGNIFICANCE OF COMMENT MADE BY SECDEF TO HIM RE INTENDED E-3A DEPLOYMENT DURING THEIR MEETING SEPTEMBER 19 AND FACT THAT HE DID NOT COMMENT SHOULD NOT REPEAT NOT BE CONSTRUED AS GOI AGREEMENT TO SUCH DEPLOYMENT. AS
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EMBASSY NOTED, (REFTEL B), DEPLOYMENT OF E-3A WILL BE REGARDED BY GOI AS MAJOR POLITICAL-MILITARY DEVELOPMENT, ONE AFFECTING ICELAND'S NATO ROLE, NATIONAL SECURITY, AND BASE OPERATIONS. AS SUCH, WE MUST ASSUME IT WILL REQUIRE CABINET CONCURRENCE OR, AT MINIMUM, PRIOR NOTIFICATION OF OUR INTENTIONS TO CABINET BY PRIME MINISTER.

2. AS DEPARTMENT WILL APPRECIATE, ANY CABINET DISCUSSION OF E-3A IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING FOREIGN MINISTER'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON WILL INEVITABLY REOPEN QUESTION OF TANGIBLE BENEFITS ICELAND RECEIVES OR MAY EXPECT TO RECEIVE FROM CONTINUED U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE HERE AS DISTINCT FROM THOSE IT WOULD OBTAIN IN INTERNATIONAL CRISIS SITUATION. IN SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES, PRIME MINISTER'S PRESENTATION ON AWACS TO HIS CABINET COLLEAGUES WOULD OBVIOUSLY BE HELPED IF HE WERE ABLE TO SO SAY - WHICH HE CANNOT NOW DO - THAT USG HAD RESPONDED POSITIVELY TO GOI'S RECENTLY-RENEWED REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE IN SEPARATING CIVILIAN FROM MILITARY FACILITIES AT KEFLAVIK. THIS WOULD PARTICULARLY BE CASE IF HE HAD TO INDICATE THAT POSITIONING OF AWACS WOULD RESULT, CONTRARY TO CLEAR INTENT OF MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING OF 1974, IN AN INCREASE IN THE AMERICAN MILITARY PROFILE AT THE BASE.

3. CURRENTLY, PRIME MINISTER IS PREOCCUPIED WITH GENERAL STRIKE BY GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES AND WITH PRESENTATION TO ALTHING, WHICH RECONVENED OCTOBER 10, OF HIS GOVERNMENT'S PROGRAM FOR THE FORTHCOMING (ELECTION) YEAR. CHANCES OF GETTING HIM TO FOCUS AT THIS TIME ON AWACS ISSUE ARE THEREFORE NOT GOOD. MEETING WITH HIM AT LATER DATE, SAY IN THREE OR FOUR WEEKS, COULD BE MORE PRODUCTIVE. BY THEN HE WOULD
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HAVE SETTLED DOWN, WE WOULD HAVE SORTED OUT OUR OWN THINKING ON TERMINAL ISSUE, AND IMPLICATIONS OF AWACS FOR BASE STAFFING, HOUSING AND OPERATIONS WHICH I SHOULD BE PREPARED TO DETAIL TO HIM, WOULD HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED AT LEAST IN PRELIMINARY FASHION. MEANTIME, CONTINUATION OF OUR OWN INTERNAL PLANNING WITH RESPECT TO AWACS COULD PROCEED PROVIDED ALL CONCERNED CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD THAT SPECIFIC GOI APPROVAL OF BASIC CONCEPT WOULD STILL HAVE TO BE SOUGHT BY EMBASSY.

4. IF THERE ARE OVERRIDING REASONS FOR DOING SO, I AM, OF COURSE, PREPARED TO SEEK EARLIER APPOINTMENT WITH PRIME MINISTER AND REQUEST GOI ASSENT TO DEPLOYMENT OF AWACS ON ITS OWN MERITS. PRIME MINISTER, I AM SURE, WOULD PERSONALLY APPRECIATE STRATEGIC AND OTHER FACTORS INVOLVED. HOWEVER, FOR REASONS INDICATED ABOVE, CHANCES OF HIM BRINGING CABINET ALONG WOULD BE ENHANCED IF I COULD PROVIDE HELPFUL ANSWERS TO QUERIES HIS COLLEAGUES HIS COLLEAGUES LESS SENSITIVE TO STRATEGIC ISSUES ARE ALMOST CERTAIN TO RAISE.

5. WOULD APPRECIATE DEPARTMENT'S COMMENTS.

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